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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 48th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Friday, 1 December 1995, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. CEAUSU

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS:

(a) REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLES 16 AND 17 OF THE COVENANT (agenda item 4) (continued)

Initial report of Algeria (continued) (E/1990/5/Add.22; E/C.12/1995/LQ.4/Rev.1)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Meghlaoui, Mr. Hamed, Mr. Hebbak and Mrs. Boubir took their places at the Committee table.

2. Mr. MEGHLAOUI (Algeria), replying to questions left pending, confirmed that it was not possible for members of the armed forces to form associations. Furthermore, under the legislation governing the formation of associations, 15 people were needed in order to establish a trade union.

Article 10. Protection of the family, mothers and children (Issues Nos. 31-39) (continued)

3. Mr. HAMED (Algeria), explaining what was meant by the delegation's comment that repression of violence in the home was made difficult by sociological factors, said that in order to punish violence a complaint had to be lodged, something the victim was often reluctant to do. As elsewhere, women and children in Algeria who were subjected to violence in the home often had a psychological block about approaching the authorities and taking their case to court. The Government was none the less aware of the problem and, where a complaint was made and evidence was provided to back up allegations, the judicial authorities passed sentence in accordance with the law. He confirmed that separation of property was the only option available to spouses in a marriage contracted under Algerian law.

4. Regarding the situation of children born out of wedlock, under the Family Code a child's legitimacy depended on recognition of paternity. Hence a child born out of wedlock who was recognized by his or her father would be considered legitimate, as if he or she had been born in wedlock.

5. There were no specific criminal proceedings for cases of violence against women, the relevant provisions of the Criminal Code being applied. As to the question about the relevance of the Sharia in such cases, it must be stressed that Algerian criminal law was largely based on the Napoleonic Code and, with the exception of the Family Code, Algerian law was virtually the same as French law. In fact, Algeria was the Maghreb country whose legislation most closely resembled that of France.

6. There had been a slight increase in juvenile delinquency, owing to the difficult situation in the country. However, it was usually little more than a case of neighbourhood nuisance. Apart from terrorism, which was a completely different matter, Algeria did not have a large-scale problem with banditry. Regrettably, the use of drugs and psychotropic substances was not unknown, although in general people under the age of 16 were not involved.

Consumption of hard drugs was not prevalent in Algeria; people preferred cannabis, which was supplied from a neighbouring country. A special committee had been set up to combat drug abuse and consisted of representatives of various branches of the Government and of civic associations. The latter had been instrumental in organizing a programme of action, which contained a number of appropriate measures and target dates for implementation and would enter into force shortly. A programme had also been launched in schools to publicize such issues.

7. Mrs. BOUBIR (Algeria) said that, in cooperation with United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Algerian Government was preparing a health education programme which would deal, inter alia, with the prevention of drug abuse. A committee in Algeria was also working on a programme to create greater awareness about the dangers of drugs among schoolchildren. There were also a number of very dynamic nationwide associations which organized seminars and talks on such matters.

8. Mr. HAMED (Algeria) said that the State was fairly lenient towards drug users, usually giving them suspended prison sentences of two to three months. Young people were hardly ever committed to prison and were usually subject to fines for drug consumption, something that was in line with the Government's policy of treating drug users as patients rather than criminals. The Health Code provided for the treatment and cure of drug addicts, but regrettably the relevant programmes had not yet got under way in State hospitals.

9. As far as divorce was concerned, in Algeria women had two options. They could apply for divorce on the specific grounds listed under article 53 of the Family Code and obtain payment or, as appropriate damages. Alternatively, they could apply for divorce without having to adduce any reasons, but in such cases they had to pay damages amounting to the equivalent of their dowry.

10. Mr. TEXIER said that the delegation had omitted to answer his question about the reasons for the failure to promulgate the act establishing a national children's fund.

11. The CHAIRPERSON, speaking as a member of the Committee, said that the Committee wished to know whether children born out of wedlock enjoyed the same status and rights as other children. The delegation had not provided information on the status of children whose fathers were unknown, or who had failed to recognize them.

12. Mr. WIMER ZAMBRANO said he had read a recent article in the Swiss press about the possible decriminalization of consuming and dealing in soft drugs. Since such drugs were not considered to be particularly harmful, it was felt that there was no need to even prosecute drug dealers. He admired the intelligent policy pursued by the Algerian Government regarding drug abuse and was aware that many drugs, including hashish, were brought in from neighbouring countries. However, he found it difficult to believe that there was not some cultivation of soft-drug plants in a country as large as Algeria, particularly since hashish had traditionally been consumed in North African countries.

13. Mr. MEGHLAOUI (Algeria) said that the act establishing a national children's fund had not been promulgated in view of the legislative reforms under way in the current period of transition, which entailed the enactment and harmonization of numerous other laws. Children were none the less well catered for, as was borne out by the fact that a third of the national budget was allocated to children's education. Soft drugs were not produced for trafficking purposes; instead they were for local consumption by people who were well known to the authorities. The police turned a blind eye to those who indulged in the habit, which was part of Algerian tradition. It was worth noting that Algeria's name had never been mentioned in connection with drugs until 1994, when it had cropped up on account of drug trafficking from a neighbouring country.

14. Mr. HAMED (Algeria) said that children born out of wedlock whose father was unknown or failed to recognize them did not enjoy the same status or rights as other children. For the time being, there was no question of decriminalizing drug trafficking, even for soft drugs, in view of what the Algerian authorities regarded as the fairly easy shift from soft to hard drugs. As to drug production, the authorities had located small areas for the cultivation of cannabis, mainly in the south of the country, which was intended not for export or trafficking but solely for family consumption.

15. Mr. GRISSA asked what was meant exactly by "family consumption". Surely it did not mean that mothers and children also partook of the drug? Perhaps the term "personal consumption" would be more appropriate. Furthermore, he would welcome additional information on official policy towards adoption.

16. Mrs. JIMENEZ BUTRAGUEÑO said that she shared Mr. Grissa's concerns regarding adoption. She had been informed that, thanks to the lobbying of women's groups in Algeria, children who enjoyed a form of legal guardianship (kafala) were now entitled to bear the name of their guardian. Kafala therefore constituted a form of adoption. However, she was concerned about the situation of abandoned children, who were not so fortunate. Apparently, they were placed in institutions where conditions left much to be desired. What steps was the State taking to provide for them? She was also interested in the reference to the committee established to promote health education in school. Perhaps the delegation could provide the name of that committee so that it could be mentioned as one of the positive aspects of Algerian society in the Committee's final report. The delegation had mentioned that Algerian legislation was based largely on the Napoleonic Code and thus on French legislation. However, there had been a number of substantive changes to the latter over the years. Had there been similar developments in Algerian law? Lastly, she would welcome more information on violence against women.

17. Mr. MEGHLAOUI (Algeria) said that by "family consumption" he had meant the habit of a father getting together with friends and relatives to smoke hashish. Certainly the consumption of cannabis was not as widespread in Algeria as in other African countries, such as Djibouti and Yemen. It was, however, part of the local culture in some regions of the country.

18. There had been positive developments regarding the adoption of children. Previously adoptive parents could not give adopted children their family name. That situation had now changed.

19. Mr. HAMED (Algeria) confirmed that policemen in the southern part of the country had come across plots of land for the cultivation of cannabis, owned by small groups of friends and relatives for their personal consumption.

20. The concept of adoption common in other countries was not recognized in Algeria. The only possibility was kafala, a form of fostering or legal guardianship, which was defined in article 116 of the Family Code. The Code provided for a commitment to take responsibility, without payment, for the maintenance, education and protection of a minor in the same way as a father would do for his son. The status of guardianship was set out in a legal deed, issued by a court or notary, and conferred on the beneficiary, who must be an upright citizen and in a position to provide for the child's maintenance and protection. Legal guardianship allowed for entitlement to the same family and educational benefits as those granted to legitimate children. Furthermore, under the Family Code, children of known parents must retain their family name. However, under a decree issued in 1992, children whose parents were unknown could assume the name of their foster parents. Under the same decree, foster parents or legal guardians could bequeath one third of their property to their foster children, subject to the consent of all legal heirs.

21. Mrs. JIMENEZ BUTRAGUEÑO said she was not entirely satisfied with the fact that there was not a proper system of adoption.

22. Mr. HAMED (Algeria) said that both the Algerian Civil Code and Criminal Code were based on the Napoleonic Code. In enacting its own legislation in 1966, Algeria had drawn on the legislation in force in France at that time and had not resorted to legislation dating from the nineteenth century. In France, the Civil Code was still commonly referred to as the Napoleonic Code.

23. Mr. MEGHLAOUI (Algeria) said that abandoned children fell into two categories: children of unknown parents, who were generally placed in institutional care; and children who were removed from the parental home, for whatever reason, and placed in institutional care on the decision of the juvenile court. Legislation provided for the care of such children in a number of ways, including kafala. Children could also be looked after by suitable foster parents, for a fee, or free of charge. Other children who were not fortunate enough to find such placements were looked after in one of the 28 State institutions. A further 18 institutions were under construction, which would accommodate a total of 2,285 children. There were also a number of associations active in Algeria, including the worldwide organization "SOS Kinderdorf International", which was run in Algeria along exactly the same lines as in other countries.

24. Mrs. BOUBIR (Algeria) said that she could not give the exact name of the committee referred to by Mrs. Jiménez Butragueño but it was a committee that had been responsible for reshaping the school health system. It consisted of representatives of the Ministries directly concerned and was assisted by representatives of UNICEF. It had established school health centres for each basic education school, had recruited medical staff, and was responsible for health education and for the campaign against social scourges.

Article 11. The right to an adequate standard of living (Issues Nos. 40-43)

25. Mr. MEGHLAOUI (Algeria) drew attention to what he had already said in his introductory statement (E/C.12/1995/SR.46) concerning the measures taken to revive the economy and also to the information already given by Mr. Hebbak.

26. Mr. TEXIER recalled that the Committee had, since its inception, paid special attention to the right to housing and had been particularly concerned with homelessness and forcible evictions. He would therefore like to know whether there was any homelessness in Algeria and, if so, what was being done to eradicate it. It would also be helpful to know what the position was with regard to eviction, both of squatters and of persons who failed to pay their rent, and with regard to expropriations in connection with public works. Did the State rehouse the persons affected by expropriations or did it merely pay compensation? Had any serious incidents occurred?

27. Mr. ADEKUOYE asked why the reply to issue No. 41 said there were no reliable data on the food situation of the most vulnerable social groups in Algeria, yet paragraph 153 of the report (E/1990/5/Add.22) gave a summary of available statistics on the composition of the food intake and its variations over the past 20 years. It would also be interesting to know how economic momentum could be sustained and increased without a rise in oil prices, something which was unlikely to occur.

28. As to housing, was there any system of rent control, and, if so, how did it work and had it affected the national stock of housing? He would also like to know what was meant by "personalized assistance in housing" and whether the phrase "the important role played by the Algerian family conceals the full extent of the phenomenon, since family solidarity affects the conditions of occupation of the housing", in paragraph 169 of the report, meant that, under the extended family system, homeless people went to stay with their relatives.

29. Mrs. AHODIKPE asked what percentage of the population lived below the poverty line.

30. Mrs. JIMENEZ BUTRAGUEÑO asked what was the percentage of aged persons suffering from incurable infirmities or diseases, mentioned in Algeria's reply to issue No. 41, and what happened to divorced women who were forced to leave the family home and owned no property.

31. Ms. TAYA said she had the impression that the structural adjustment programme, with its liberalization of trade, cutting-off of subsidies, unfreezing of commodity prices and deregulation of foreign investment, made the Algerian economy more dependent on the international market and was not very conducive to growth. She would therefore like to know the Government's assessment of the structural adjustment programme and to have some information on Algeria's international market-oriented economic policies.

32. The CHAIRPERSON observed that it was very difficult for a national economy to remain independent of the world economy.

33. Mr. MEGHLAOUI (Algeria) replied that, since economic liberalization was a new phenomenon, it was difficult to go into details. In any case, no State could live apart from the global market. Algeria had a new Code of Commerce and a new Investment Code and was preparing to join the World Trade Organization. The consequences of economic liberalization for Algeria were the same as they were for all other countries in similar circumstances.

34. Mr. HEBBAK (Algeria) explained that the right to housing had existed since Algeria's independence. Homeless persons were taken in by their families and were very few in number. Severe overcrowding occurred, but in Algeria people did not die of cold in the street. Some 90 per cent of the housing stock was State-owned and very low rents were charged. Only the rich lived in the high-rent private sector. No real evictions took place. Slum-dwellers had priority in rehousing programmes and persons living in makeshift accommodation were given materials with which to build their own homes under the "personalized assistance in housing" scheme. The 4 million persons in the social "safety net" were considered to be disadvantaged.

35. The public sector had a large deficit, but the State was disengaging from economic activity and that should enable it to concentrate more on social action. Despite a fall in industrial production, privatization of agriculture had led to an increase in output, especially in the newly developing Saharan areas, and that in turn would reduce the need to import food on such a large scale.

36. National solidarity was strongest in the countryside. Disadvantaged groups appeared in the towns and cities, but they were taken care of by the social "safety net". In 1995 the State had built over 160,000 housing units, as compared with 60,000 and 80,000 in 1993 and 1994.

37. There were no reliable statistics on the percentage of aged persons suffering from incurable infirmities or disease. The reference was probably to aged persons needing the help of a nurse or specialized health worker. If a divorced woman had no home, she usually benefited from family solidarity.

38. Mr. HAMED (Algeria) confirmed that divorced women were always accepted back into their families of origin. To leave a divorced woman in the street would be a great disgrace for her family. Often the divorcing husband left the family home to his former wife and his children.

39. There were almost no squatters in Algeria because there was virtually no vacant housing. Very often the situation of persons who built their own homes on land that they did not own was subsequently regularized. Under the Civil Code, any landlord could terminate a lease by applying to a court of first instance. An appeal lay to a higher court and, until it had been heard, the original judgement could not be enforced. The State proposed compensation for expropriations; if the expropriated person considered the compensation to be inadequate, he could appeal to a court. There again, an appeal lay to a higher court.

40. Mr. MEGHLAOUI (Algeria) said that the State looked after the most vulnerable and indigent sectors of society, reserving a quota of subsidized housing units for them. Most disputes concerning expropriation were settled

amicably and expropriated persons were rehoused. The State was the country's foremost builder. In the past the State had built housing and then let it to citizens at very low rents. In fact, rents had not increased since independence, thereby creating a major problem which was now being settled. A housing market was in the process of being created.

41. Mr. GRISSA said that he was surprised to hear that rents had not increased since independence. If that was so, it was difficult to see how housing could be kept in an acceptable state of repair. Also, if 90 per cent of housing belonged to the State, he wondered what had happened to the stock of private housing in existence before independence.

42. Ms. TAYA observed that, if the Government were to subsidize domestic food production, the increased output would help to reduce the amount of food that had to be imported and would safeguard the lives of ordinary people.

43. Mr. TEXIER said experience showed that State schemes to provide specialized assistance to those wishing to build their own homes were often more effective than home construction projects undertaken entirely by the State. Was there any particular policy in that regard?

44. Mrs. AHODIKPE said she had not received an answer to her question about the percentage of the population living below the poverty line. Would the Algerian delegation provide figures, broken down by region?

45. Mr. MEGHLAOUI (Algeria) said that no statistics were available on the percentage of the population living below the poverty line. However, there were 4 million people on incomes below 7,000 Algerian dinars (about 700 French francs) covered by the social "safety net".

46. With regard to Mr. Grissa's questions, private housing abandoned by the occupants on independence had been taken over by the State. Since then, the State had become the main, but not the sole, builder of homes, which it had rented to individuals at absurdly low rents. As a result, it had indeed proved impossible to maintain the housing stock in a proper state of repair and the State had therefore begun to sell off its housing to the occupants at very low prices. Since the introduction of a new policy in the early 1980s, new housing and commercial premises built by the State were rented out at much more realistic rates. The trend was to bring rates into line with market levels, although the poorest sections of the population would continue to benefit from State welfare measures.

47. Ms. Taya's question about food prices was a matter of economic choices. Algeria's domestic needs were so great that little thought had been given to food exports. A few foodstuffs, such as citrus fruits, dates and wine, were exported, but Algeria was a net importer of commodities such as wheat. As to Mr. Texier's question, State schemes existed to assist certain categories of persons in building their own homes, usually in small towns or rural areas. The State provided land and materials and the recipients then built their own homes with help from friends and neighbours - an ancient tradition known as touiza. State aid was also available to persons with some limited financial means. In the period before the State had begun to distribute land, there had been a good deal of unregulated home building on sites that lacked the proper

facilities. Most of that housing had been regularized retrospectively and the State now provided such persons with viable building plots, facilities, and concessionary loans.

Article 12. The right to physical and mental health (Issues Nos. 44-52)

48. Mr. TEXIER said that, while Algeria had not yet been seriously affected by the AIDS crisis, the situation could easily change. What was the Government's policy with regard to information on and prevention of AIDS? Were campaigns being conducted in schools or among the population at large?

49. Mr. MEGHLAOUI (Algeria) said that there had been cases of AIDS in Algeria and that the Government took the problem very seriously. The State was conducting information campaigns, and information was itself a form of prevention. There was as yet no systematic screening of cases, but the World Health Organization was tackling the problem at global level. Algeria participated actively in the Global Programme on AIDS and sent a delegation to the United Nations Steering Committee on AIDS. Information was provided in schools and in the media. The previous day, for instance, much broadcasting time on Algerian television had been given over to information on and prevention of AIDS in the context of World AIDS Day. Algeria's blood transfusion service had still to be fully modernized, but much progress had been made in that regard, for health, along with education, took pride of place in the Algerian budget.

50. Mr. TEXIER asked whether Algeria's AIDS prevention campaign included information on the controversial issue of the need to use condoms in order to prevent transmission of the disease.

51. Mr. HEBBAK (Algeria) said that the information campaigns were general in scope. Contraceptives were freely available, however, and could be bought in all pharmacies throughout the country.

52. Mr. MEGHLAOUI (Algeria) said that it was during the televised information campaigns on AIDS that expressions such as "sexual relations" had first been used on television during family viewing time - an indication that taboos were fast disappearing. As condoms were freely available, they could be used as protection against transmission of the disease.

53. Mrs. JIMENEZ BUTRAGUEÑO asked what steps were taken to ensure the health of children, and particularly of abandoned children and those in care.

54. Mr. MEGHLAOUI (Algeria) said it was probably true that children in institutions received less attention than other children. If the mortality rate was higher among that category of children, the fact that they were denied parental love was no doubt a significant contributory factor.

Articles 13 and 14. The right to education (Issues Nos. 53-59)

55. Mr. GRISSA said that, although schooling was apparently compulsory in Algeria for children up to the age of 16, the written reply to issue No. 54 showed a marked disparity between the numbers of girls and of boys in primary

and middle school education. Was elementary education in fact compulsory for girls as well as for boys? To what were the differing statistics attributable?

56. Mr. THAPALIA asked whether ethnic minorities were receiving equal educational opportunities. If so, could the Algerian delegation provide statistics on educational opportunities for ethnic minorities such as the Berbers and Touaregs? In view of the terrorist violence in Algeria, had the State any concrete plan to promote awareness of human rights among Interior Ministry officials and teachers of religion? It was only too well-known that violence bred violence, thereby undermining the democratic process.

57. Mr. MARCHAN ROMERO, taking up Mr. Thapalia's second question, asked whether, in view of the violence allegedly perpetrated by the forces engaged in combating terrorism, there were any arrangements for training members of the armed forces and police in human rights matters.

58. Mr. TEXIER said that, according to the written reply to issue No. 53, the rate of illiteracy among the adult population was 17 per cent. Elsewhere it was stated that education was compulsory and available free to all children up to the age of 16. Did the Algerian delegation consider that the objective set forth in article 13 of the Covenant, namely, compulsory primary education available free to all, had been attained? If so, what were the causes of the high illiteracy rate in Algeria and what was being done to lower it?

59. Mrs. JIMENEZ BUTRAGUEÑO asked how the right of abandoned children to education was secured. Were they educated in ordinary schools or in special schools? With regard to issue No. 59, it was important to set cultural objectives early in life. Had the Algerian authorities considered including human rights issues, especially equality of the sexes, in the primary school curriculum? Members of the Committee had drawn attention to the importance of training the armed forces and police in human rights issues. It was perhaps even more important to train judges in those issues, in view of the great interpretative power they wielded in Algeria. Were any measures envisaged in that regard?

60. Mr. ALVAREZ VITA said that, according to a document of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) dated 9 March 1995, health education was to be introduced into the Algerian school curriculum. How was that matter being tackled? The same document recommended that the literacy rate among young women over the age of 15 should be increased by 20 per cent. What, within the existing constraints, was being done to secure that objective?

61. Mrs. BOUBIR (Algeria) said that, before answering specific questions, she would attempt to provide a broad overview of the Algerian education system. The State aimed to provide all children with a general education and to turn out literate adults. At independence in 1962, 90 per cent of the population had been illiterate. Against that background, education had been considered a fundamental right of all citizens, and thus of all children, regardless of their social or material circumstances. The right to education was enunciated in the Constitution, inter alia in article 50, and made explicit in the Decree of 16 April 1976, which set out the right of all Algerians to receive education and training, made education compulsory for those between the ages

of 6 and 16, and provided for education at all levels free of charge. The system was universal in scope, providing children, as a minimum, with reading and writing skills and inculcating the principles of justice and equality between citizens and peoples. It promoted understanding and cooperation between peoples with a view to securing universal peace and respect for the sovereignty of peoples. It also promoted an education that was in accordance with human rights and fundamental freedoms.

62. Specifically, practical measures had included the building of additional schools, with 9 years' compulsory schooling to prepare children for life in society, or for secondary education or vocational training. Most school establishments offered additional services, such as boarding facilities, canteens or transport. Support was provided for children with educational difficulties and grants were available for children from needy backgrounds. Children's health and development was monitored by the school health system.

63. Responding to Mr. Grissa's question, she said that in 1994/95 the national rate of school attendance among 6-year-olds had been 90.34 per cent for girls and 97.3 per cent for boys. As far as trends were concerned, the attendance rate for girls had risen from 31.54 per cent in 1966/67 to 90.56 per cent in 1991/92. The rate for by boys had risen from 58.29 per cent in 1966/67 to 97.3 per cent in 1994/95.

64. Mr. GRISSA said he fully appreciated Algeria's educational efforts. What he wished to know was the reason for the larger number of boys than girls enrolled in compulsory education, i.e. aged 6 to 16. Did girls not have the same right to education as boys? Was education not strictly compulsory?

65. Mr. MEGHLAOUI (Algeria) said that the reason for the discrepancy might be a higher proportion of boys than girls in the population under the age of 16, but possibly also a certain reluctance on the part of some parents to send their adolescent daughters to school. Compulsory though education was, people could not in practice be forced into complying with that obligation.

66. As to Mr. Thapalia's question about minorities, he did not always grasp what was meant by the term "minority". Algerians did not like the imported term "Berber". There were no Berbers in Algeria; there were Amazighs, but there was no Amazigh minority in Algeria. There was, however, an Amazigh language, which was part of the national heritage. Algeria was now endeavouring to restore the Algerian people's identity and roots, from which they had been severed during the colonial era. There was now an Office of the High Commissioner for Amazighité and the Amazigh language was taught in schools.

67. Mr. TEXIER asked why the term "Berber" was rejected. As he understood it, the Amazigh people were not confined to Algeria, but existed in other Maghreb countries.

68. The CHAIRPERSON assured the Algerian delegation that the Committee was aware that certain issues were sensitive and it did not wish to create minorities where there were none. All questions were asked with full sympathy for Algeria and the Algerian people and the efforts of its authorities to guarantee the exercise of human rights. It was customary in United Nations

bodies to raise questions about minorities and to use certain terms to describe groups with specific languages or cultures. It could be seen from Algeria's report that there were some linguistic minorities, and the Committee's questions were directed towards ensuring that linguistic and cultural groups had the right to use their mother tongue and that cultural pluralism was preserved, with all due regard for the specific features of Algerian society and for a constructive dialogue with the Algerian delegation.

69. Mr. MEGHLAOUI (Algeria) reiterated that there was no uniform acceptation of the term "minority". In Europe, some countries recognized minorities and minority rights, while others were more concerned with a melting-pot concept of the nation. If there could be any talk of "minorities" in Algeria - although he was reluctant to use the term - there was never any ethnic connotation, but only one of identity. Algeria was determined to find its roots and recover its identity. As to the people some termed "Berbers", a designation he personally refused to accept, it was true, as Mr. Texier had said, that they existed across North and even West Africa.

70. The CHAIRPERSON said that the Committee might at some later stage devote a day of discussion to the interesting question of national minorities.

71. Mr. MEGHLAOUI (Algeria) said that, for the time being, there were no specific human rights education programmes in schools, but there were occasional lessons in human rights. A somewhat more structured programme might be introduced in the near future. There were human rights training programmes for the police and the armed forces, but still on a very limited scale. In reply to the question about education for abandoned children, he would stress that the right to education was guaranteed for all. Abandoned children placed in families attended regular schools on an equal footing with other children, without discrimination or segregation. There were also university chairs in human rights and international humanitarian law. It must be remembered that concern for human rights issues was a relatively recent development in Algeria and that every effort was now being made to address those issues.

72. Mrs. BOUBIR (Algeria) added that a multidisciplinary and intersectoral commission had been established in 1995 to consider human rights education and design a programme of human rights studies to be incorporated in the school curriculum. The question of illiteracy could be placed in perspective by considering that an illiterate person was defined as one over the age of 10 years who could not read, write or do elementary arithmetic. According to UNESCO figures, the illiteracy rate prior to colonization was estimated to have been as low as 14 per cent. By 1948 it had risen to 94 per cent. Between 1966, the date of the first census, and 1989, it had dropped from 74.6 per cent to 42.7 per cent, and it now stood at 17 per cent. She gave detailed figures for the intervening years.

73. The CHAIRPERSON said that, in future, the Committee would welcome all detailed statistics in writing, but would be content during the discussion with a few figures by way of illustration.

74. Mr. HAMED (Algeria), referring to the question of human rights education for judges, said that the curriculum of the National Institute of the Magistrature, which had been set up in 1989 for the training of judges, included a course in human rights. Moreover, provision had been made in the new organizational structure of the Ministry of Justice for the establishment of a Sub-Directorate for Human Rights.

75. Mr. MEGHLAOUI (Algeria) added that human rights education for law enforcement officials had been restricted by the shortage of human resources, but efforts were being made to remedy that shortcoming, in particular with the help of the National Human Rights Observatory.

76. Mr. GRISSA said he shared Mr. Meghlaoui's view of the term "Berber", which originally meant "uncivilized" or "ignorant" and was rejected by the very populations concerned. On another matter, was he right in believing that a solution had been found to the problem of the nomadic Touaregs across the Saharan region?

77. Mr. ADEKUOYE asked for more details about the drop-out rates in primary and middle schools, and whether those dropping out, especially girls, were then regarded as unemployed or semi-employed.

78. Mr. MEGHLAOUI (Algeria), replying to Mr. Grissa, said that the question of the Touaregs was a long-standing issue. Under an agreement signed with Mali, repatriation had begun and was proceeding very smoothly. An agreement had also been signed with Nigeria and, although some difficulties had been encountered, he believed that they were only temporary and that it would be applied as in the case of Mali. All refugees in Algeria were fully taken care of in cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Algerian Red Crescent and national NGOs.

79. Mrs. BOUBIR (Algeria) said that there were few drop outs among children below the age of 16 because of compulsory schooling from ages 6 to 16. Children were entitled to repeat classes and there were remedial classes for any children with learning difficulties.

80. Mr. MEGHLAOUI (Algeria) specified that the drop-out rate was 2.57 per cent among primary school children and 13.8 per cent among those attending middle school. Although he did not have the figures, the drop-out rate was probably higher among girls than boys, but only marginally so.

Article 15. The right to take part in cultural life and to benefit from scientific progress and the protection of intellectual property rights (Issues Nos. 60-61)

81. Mrs. JIMENEZ BUTRAGUEÑO asked whether the Government used the knowledge and experience of older persons, such as those retiring early, in helping young people, for instance by encouraging their participation in voluntary organizations, or in teaching at university. Were any special facilities available to the elderly to enable them to attend cultural or sports activities, for instance, at reduced prices?

82. Mr. MEGHLAOUI (Algeria) said that pensioners were free to join and form associations, for which the formalities had been greatly simplified since the law on associations had been adopted in 1989. The work of associations and participation by the community were much appreciated by the Government. The delegation was unable to inform the Committee about special facilities for older persons to take part in cultural activities.

83. In conclusion, he wished to emphasize that Algeria was reporting to the Committee for the first time and had been unfamiliar with its working methods. The report covered a wide range of issues and the delegation had replied to the Committee's questions to the best of its ability. Both the format and the report and the information it contained would be more satisfactory in the future. It must be borne in mind that Algeria was undergoing a process of transition to democracy, which would be consolidated and developed. The recent democratic election of the President of the Republic was a major step forward and would be followed by general and local elections. Civil society was very active in Algeria today and the State strongly encouraged NGOs, which could operate in total freedom, even though their resources were limited. He thanked the Committee for its comments and looked forward to further dialogue in the future.

84. Mr. GRISSA commended the Algerian delegation's frank replies to often complex questions. He understood the difficult economic situation prevailing in Algeria and the Government's efforts to solve its problems, and trusted that that understanding was mutual.

85. The CHAIRPERSON thanked the Algerian delegation for its cooperation and for its constructive dialogue with the Committee, whose concluding observations on Algeria's initial periodic report would be adopted and made public at the final meeting of the present session.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.